



# The Weekly Page

VOLUME 5 ISSUE 10

MARCH 20, 2009

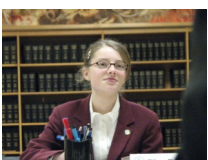
## Pages Learn About Legislature



### Big ideas in government

Throughout the week pages grappled with understanding the three “big ideas” for a representative government: **governing society is a complex process, successful democracies rely on responsible citizens, and government affects our life every day.** As they participated in daily discussions, listened to guest speakers, and proposed bills in mock committee hearings, their understanding around the concepts deepened. On Friday, they wrote about one of the big ideas to demonstrate the depth of their new knowledge.

### Bill prevents smoking in vehicles containing minors



Olympia – Yesterday, Senator Eliza Ramsey introduced Senate Bill 6714, which addresses the issue of smoking in a vehicle with minors. “The bill is a good one because it protects the health of children,” said Sen.

Ramsey. Children are at a much higher risk for developing health issues related to inhaling second-hand smoke, such as asthma, ear infections that lead to hearing loss, bronchitis and pneumonia. “The Legislature intends to prohibit anyone from smoking in automobiles when children are present if this bill

becomes law,” said Sen. Ramsey. A fine of \$150 will be given for the first offense.

### Sleep deprivation not a problem anymore



Olympia – Yesterday, Senator Drew Langer introduced Senate Bill 6380, which addresses the issue of sleep deprivation in high school students. “The bill is a good one because it will result in better academic performance and

improved health,” said Sen. Langer. Studies have found that students do not get between 8.5 and 9.5 hours of sleep per night are at risk for obesity, depression, and drowsiness while driving. They also have decreased performance in school. When the Minneapolis public schools moved their high school start times from 7:15 a.m. to 8:40 a.m., they found a marked improvement in both health and achievement. “What we do in this bill is establish a required start time of no earlier than 8.20 a.m. for all public high schools. Also, in order to eliminate a clash of schedules with extra-curricular activities, all schools must begin by at least 8:50 a.m.,” said Sen. Langer.





## Mock committees debate bills

Pages worked individually or in small groups to research and write bills designed to address issues which were relevant to them and the state. They had their choice of working up a social bill or a fiscal bill to present in a mock committee hearing on Thursday. Students spent a day either researching social problems or playing the “Ax and Tax” budget game to get information for constructing their bills. They used class templates to transfer the information and their proposed solutions to a very real-looking House or Senate bill. Pages read their bills and “committee members,” governed by the rules of parliamentary procedure, debated the pros and cons of the proposals. A “DO PASS” or “DO NOT PASS” recommendation was then voted upon, allowing a bill to continue on in the legislative process. As in the real political system, some bills died in committee.

## Senate tries to balance budget

Olympia—Yesterday Senators Sarah Givens, Precious Young, Garrett Stephenson, Hunter Pederson, Alexander Weymiller, Jane Aguero, Benjamin Anderson, Holly Hillman and Thomas Messenger met with the Senate Ways and Means Committee to



pound out hard solutions to a serious budget shortfall predicted for the next biennium.

“There just doesn’t seem to be any way around raising some taxes,” said Sen. Aguero, who suggested a five cent tax on soda and a \$1 increase in liquor taxes. Other senators added a

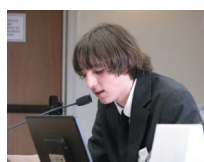
50 cent cigarette tax. “Neither of these is a necessity. Many people won’t stop buying the items with this modest raise, and those addicted to cigarettes will pay just about any amount to get what they want or need,” said Sen. Hillman. Sen. Givens also advocated for extending the sales tax to haircuts and beauty services. “Currently these are not taxed, so these services have had a tax break for quite a few years. It’s only fair that these services pay their share now.” Other proposals included cuts in goods and services in all government sectors by

1/4. “There is a lot of waste that we could eliminate,” said Sen. Pederson. “Families and businesses are having to cut back in these tough times and the government should, too. This will save \$200 million,” he said. Additional cuts included reducing spending on personal bodyguards for the governor and the lieutenant governor, closing the state film office, cutting the deduction in class size funds and a one percent across-the-board cut in all government agencies. Sen. Weymiller’s suggestion was to do away with the \$140 million class-size reduction increase. “The proposed amount of money would only reduce the typical class by about one student. This isn’t a significant enough difference to continue its funding,” he said. Fairness was the issue with Sen. Young in suggesting the across-the-board cut. The total savings or added revenue to the state budget for the entire Senate package amounts to over \$930 million.



## Rough...no puff!

Olympia – House Bill 2134 was introduced yesterday by Representative Kyle Souza.



“This bill addresses the issue of second-hand smoke in automobiles and will protect the health of young children,” said Rep. Souza. Children are more at risk than adults for adverse health

effects of secondhand smoke, ranging from ear infections to asthma and bronchitis. “Secondhand smoke contains 250 known cancer causing chemicals that kids have to inhale when drivers are smoking,” said Rep. Souza. If this bill becomes a law, drivers will not be allowed to smoke with children younger than 16 in the car. This will be a secondary offense for one year and then it will change into a primary offense. The fine will be \$200.

## High schoolers get later start times



Olympia – Senate Bill 5005 was introduced yesterday by Senators Julie Luce, Courtney McBride, and Bridget Matloff. “This bill addresses the issue of high school start times and will improve academic achievement and student health,” said Sen. Luce. Sleep

deprivation impairs creativity, communication, abstract thinking, problem solving, innovation, decision making, mood, motivation, and the ability to pay attention. When students are able to sleep for 8.5 to 9.5 hours a night, it reduces their risk of metabolic and nutritional deficits associated with insufficient sleep, including obesity. The Minneapolis school district changed its beginning school times and found improvement in attendance rates, increased daytime alertness, and decreased student-reported depression. “This idea will have the same result in our state,” said Sen. McBride. “We intend to help our kids by prohibiting any public high school in the state from starting before 8:30 a.m. with this bill,” said Sen. Matloff.

## Prevention of homelessness outlawed



Olympia – House Bill 1111 was introduced yesterday by Representative Carolyn Maples. “This bill addresses the issue of homelessness and will help those people who need a place to clean up and stay temporarily,” said Rep. Maples.

The bill will outlaw all city council policies outlawing homelessness. Currently, the city of Lacey has forbid homeless tents in church parking lots. In addition, the bill will open public showers to offer more opportunities for the homeless to clean up for a job interview and provide for their own personal hygiene, in turn reducing likelihood of infections and disease.

## State working to improve climate conditions



Olympia – House Bill 3998 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Nan Tilghman and Myra Brisky. “This bill addresses the issue

of climate change and will reduce our carbon footprint and help us improve the climate,” said Rep. Brisky. Because of man-made activities, the climate is rapidly changing, and an immediate solution is needed. Sea levels have risen in most areas of southern Mexico and the Western and Eastern United States.

On a whole, people released as much as 28 billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere last year. The combination of CO<sub>2</sub> and greenhouse gases being released is eating away at our ozone layer. This bill aims to reduce pollution levels by requiring orchards to cut down on pesticides by 5 percent, factories to cut back 10 percent of their current average emissions per day, and citizens to reduce their energy use by 5 percent. Fines will be imposed on those who do not conform to the policy.

## Is a pre-kindergarten education helpful?



Olympia – House Bill 2537 was introduced yesterday by Representative Karissa Boyd. “This bill addresses the issue of poverty and education and will help increase school achievement in low-income children,” said Rep. Boyd.

“The achievement gap is largely a preparation gap,” she said. Low-income families often do not have the time or income to provide an adequate pre-kindergarten experience for their children. Currently, Washington’s early learning programs serve only half the eligible low-income children, leaving more than 14,000 unserved each year. This bill provides funding to child-care associations that support low-income families.

## Guest speakers visit Page School

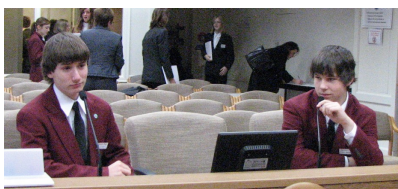
Rep Ross Hunter (D-48th), session aide Sam Jessup (for Sen. Rockefeller, D-23rd), intern Nicole Frattini (for Sen. Rodney Tom D-48th), and Sen. Tracey Eide (D-30th) joined the pages during classes on Wednesday. The speakers talked about what led them to their current positions and shared insightful information about their jobs and the legislation they are currently sponsoring.



Pages were able to interact with these guests by asking questions and sharing their own views in response to the speaker’s questions.



## Six-month rule unfair



Olympia – Senate Bill 7000 was introduced yesterday by Senators Ian Ducharme and Scot Haddow. “This bill addresses the issue of restrictive teen

driving laws and will repeal the 6-month rule for new drivers,” said Sen. Ducharme. “Since Washington is trying to ‘go green’ it would be helpful if the highways had less drivers on our roads. By restricting new drivers from transporting their friends to events, it forces everyone to drive their own cars. This creates more pollution,” said Sen. Haddow. Recent studies show that many teens do not follow this law and it makes otherwise innocent teens into criminals. This distracts law enforcement officers from more important things.

## Be aware of food additives



Olympia – Senate Bill 7997 was introduced yesterday by Senators Petra Bethea and Jenna Bjur. “This bill addresses the issue of food additives and will reduce

health problems in our citizens,” said Sen. Bjur. “Food companies are putting additives in our food that our bodies can’t digest. Products labeled ‘heart healthy’ may actually be twice as likely to cause heart attacks,” said Sen. Bethea. Aspartame is an additive in diet beverages that can cause permanent damage to the nerve system. If this bill becomes law, all food companies in Washington State which add chemicals to their products will be required to include labels on the products that warn of side effects from the chemicals. “This policy will help people be more aware of the danger they are placing themselves in by consuming these products,” said Sen. Bjur.

## Dropout rate to take a nosedive



Olympia – House Bill 1112 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Morgan Sherif and Sarah Enders. “This bill addresses the issue of high school dropouts and will increase our graduation rates,” said Rep. Enders. Too many stu-

dents in Washington State are dropping out of high school. According to a recent news article, 22 high schools are considered “Drop Out Factories” at this time. In these schools, only 60 percent of students make it from freshman year to senior

year. Studies show that most high school dropouts are low-income students who receive free/reduced priced lunches. This bill prohibits dropping out of high school before junior year and requires all public high schools to develop a Check In program, which will link low-income students with someone who will check their grades regularly and provide resources to help students finish their assignments.

## Equitable science curriculum advocated



Olympia – Senate Bill 5003 was introduced yesterday by Senators Jake Escobedo, Andrew Escobedo, and Tony Davis. “This bill addresses the issue of science education and will give the students a

choice about what they believe about the origin of life,” said Sen. Jake Escobedo. “Theories are being unequally taught in public schools. Instead of teaching just one theory over all the others, all theories need to be equally taught. So in public schools all the theories of the origin of life with a substantial amount of evidence need to be taught along side each other in a fair manner,” said Sen. Davis.

## Restrictions imposed to reduce teen abortions

Olympia – House Bill 1210 was introduced yesterday by Representative Kayla Yotter. “This bill addresses the issue of abortion and will reduce the amount of sickness and deaths of both teen mothers and their babies,” said Rep. Yotter. The fifth leading cause of maternal death in the US is legal teen abortions. Teens getting abortions are at higher risk of breast cancer, as well. This bill provides placement services for babies of pregnant teens and health services for the mother. It also requires teens under the age of 18 to have parental consent before an abortion is performed and permits abortions only during the first trimester of a pregnancy. “Establishing these new requirements will reduce the unnecessary deaths of both the mother and child,” said Rep. Yotter.



## Combining death penalty trials saves state money



Olympia – Yesterday, Representatives Gage Gunter and Andrew Amos introduced House Bill 1001, which addresses the issue of death penalty cases. “The bill is a good one because it will promote

justice and reduce spending,” said Rep. Amos. Should this bill become law, the Legislature will combine both the criminal trial and the sentencing hearing into one event to save money. Research shows that death penalty cases are far more expensive than other murder cases due to the extra resources used and the length of the trials. A death penalty trial takes three to five times longer than typical murder trials.

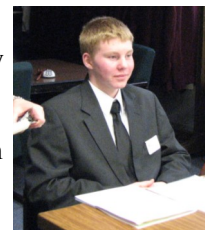
## House says cuts/taxes only way to end state’s financial crisis

Olympia—Yesterday, the House Ways and Means Committee heard testimony from Representatives Rachel Harner, Emily Estabrook, Neil Christenson, Alex Vaith, Laura Woodward, J. Peter Morgan, Thomas Messenger and Douglas Tervo regarding the projected revenue shortfall for the 2009-2011 biennium and the suggested remedies to balance the state operating budget. “We are in a terrible economic crisis, the worst we’ve seen in decades,” said Rep. Harner. Among the list of cuts offered were slashing government spending on goods and services by 25 percent, closing the state film office, withholding the class size funds, eliminating health care coverage for illegal immigrant children, and suspending school worker raises. “Over the next two years, the general public will suffer from involuntary cuts in services and goods, so it is only right that the government should sacrifice, as well. This will save the state \$200 million,” said Rep. Woodward. State financed health



care was an item that Rep. Morgan felt should be reserved for citizens only. “If they wish to have our health care, they can become citizens. We should not have to pay for them. We can save \$61 million with this policy,” he said.

Although many legislators had made campaign promises not to raise taxes, the committee saw a need to make up for lost revenues by raising the tax on cigarettes, liquor, soda, raising over one billion dollars. “The soft drink is a very popular drink, so a five cent increase would not be a great burden. This is not an everyday necessity, either, and we can raise \$272,” said Rep. Vaith. Adamant about not making any cuts to the state budget, Rep. Christenson was the biggest tax proponent. He advocated increasing the state’s portion of the sales tax to 7.5 percent, raising property taxes to the highest amount allowed—\$3.60 per \$1,000—as well as imposing a state income tax of one percent on all wage-earners who make more than 200 percent of the poverty level. “We need to make sure that many key programs in our state keep running and this will raise nearly \$6 billion dollars,” he said. Rep. Tervo reasoned that a temporary placement of a tax on food for two years would bring in \$1.5 billion. “I know times are bad, but we should come out of this situation in good shape if we make some sacrifices now,” he said.



## Teachers passionate about civic education

The Washington State Legislature’s 2009 Page School employs teachers Judi Orr, a certificated teacher, and Matt Kreiling, former Legislative intern and lobbyist. Judi is a retired social studies and English teacher who taught for over 35 years in the Clover Park School District, and Matt lobbied for the Washington Student Lobby representing college students throughout Wash-



ington. “I really enjoy facilitating learning and watching those light bulbs go off each week,” said Matt, as he introduced himself on Monday. Both teachers enjoyed meeting so many students from all parts of Washington and teaching

them more about how state government functions. “I’d be a committee ‘junkie’ if I wasn’t teaching each day. Watching citizens testify about various issues alongside experts in the field is just fascinating to me,” said Judi.



### Competitive edge results in *Jeopardy* win

On Friday pages tested their knowledge of the Legislative process in a spirited game of *Jeopardy*. Winning teams were comprised of individuals who had learned the most during their week in Page School and were awarded certificates and brightly colored stickers that they wore proudly for the rest of the day.

### Page program over 100 years old



The Legislative page program has been in existence since 1891. This photo is of pages who served in past years. The first female page served in 1937. In the past, pages were required to do ironing and cleaning for members. Page duties today are much more professional..

### Page School on the web

The Page School has its own web site. You can find us at: [www1.leg.wa.gov/WorkingwithLeg/PageSchool/](http://www1.leg.wa.gov/WorkingwithLeg/PageSchool/). This newsletter has been posted there.

